

UN-GLOBE Statement

IDAHOBIT – Break the Silence: *Speak Out Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in the UN*

On 17 May 1990, the 43rd World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization de-pathologised homosexuality by removing it from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). To commemorate this decision, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) is marked annually on this day. 30 years later, despite much progress being made, LGBTIQ+ people continue to experience pervasive discrimination that negatively impacts all aspects of our lives, including in the workplace. Sadly, the United Nations workplace is no exception.

A 2019 report on sexual harassment in the UN System found that:

- respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, and queer reported the highest prevalence rates of sexual harassment
- the most vulnerable groups were transgender, gender non-conforming, other and female respondents
- those identifying as transgender and gender non-confirming were 2.1 times more likely to experience sexual harassment

The results send a dangerous signal that LGBTIQ+ personnel are not equally respected and protected in the UN. In fulfilling its mandate to address the needs of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics the UN must equally ensure that those within its own ranks are not discriminated against. The current status-quo prevents many UN personnel from being able to work in safety and dignity, and it diminishes the capacity of the UN in addressing the needs of vulnerable LGBTIQ+ populations.

On the occasion of this 30th anniversary of IDAHOBIT, UN-GLOBE – the inter-agency group representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in the UN system – calls on you to ensure that all personnel are treated with dignity and respect and are aware of their role and responsibilities in maintaining a workplace free of any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment.

Creating a safe workplace where each person feels included and valued can unlock the incredible potential of each one of us – a capacity that will enrich the UN. Policies and guidelines must be strengthened and training on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics must be offered to all personnel, and in particular to personnel with specialized functions, such as those in HR or interacting with UN beneficiaries. In many locations where the UN operates, discussions surrounding sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics are difficult or taboo. It is even more important in those locations that senior UN leadership break the silence by openly addressing the stigma, harassment and discrimination affecting their personnel within UN offices.

UN-GLOBE urges you to join us in speaking out against homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, and promoting and maintaining a workplace free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.